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UA3/9 2013 Spring Semester Update

WKU President's Office

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Recommended Citation

WKU President's Office and Ransdell, Gary, "UA3/9 2013 Spring Semester Update" (2013). *WKU Archives Records*. Paper 2561.
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_ua_records/2561

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From: Gary Ransdell
To: Faculty-All; Staff-All
Subject: 2013 Spring Semester Update
Date: Fri. 2/15/2013 11:30AM

As we head into the heart of the spring 2013 semester, there are a few things that I wanted to share with you as we study trends and anticipate our challenges.

1. **General Assembly/Agency Bonds.** The 2013 Kentucky General Assembly is well under way. This is a short, non-budget session, so there is not much in play for Higher Education in general or WKU specifically. The only Bill that we are tracking closely relates to the approval of university “agency” bonds. As I have communicated with you previously, the debt on this WKU bond will be paid through a portion of the out-of-state tuition margin paid by Navitas international students. Part of their out-of-state tuition will be reinvested back into an Honors College/International Center that will serve high-achieving students and all of our international students, both of which are high academic priorities.
2. **2012 Statewide Enrollment.** As for trends that we are watching, I have attached for you the statewide Fall 2012 Enrollment Report, just released last week by the Council on Postsecondary Education. Graduate enrollments are struggling across most institutions and undergraduate enrollments are relatively flat. It did get our attention that Kentucky Community and Technical College System enrollments are down considerably, primarily due to a significant decline in dual enrollment programs for high school students—which is a category where we are experiencing considerable growth. We are tracking these trends closely.
3. **Spring Enrollment.** Speaking about our own enrollment, we are studying our spring enrollment numbers on a daily basis. When the final census numbers are official in a few more weeks, we will likely see a modest decline in freshman and sophomore enrollments and a decline in graduate students. We are fighting changing credentialing requirements for public school teachers and a highly-competitive marketplace with for-profit institutions and smaller private institutions who are setting their graduate student price points well below what we have been able to do. We will continue to monitor these trends and compete in the prospective student marketplace. Again, our ability to retain freshman and sophomores and stabilize our freshman to sophomore retention is among our biggest challenges and most important priorities.
4. **Energy Savings.** I am pleased to report to you some encouraging news as it relates to our energy usage, conservation efforts, and future plans. Congratulations to everyone across our campus for our ability to continue to conserve energy and reduce our spending on utilities. For three years now, we have not increased our base budget funding for utilities, and we have put our energy savings back into further cost-reduction strategies. These efforts are paying off as we continue to reduce our utility expenditures even while campus square footage is increasing.

5. **From Coal to Gas.** On a related note, I am also pleased to tell you that we are fully decommissioning our coal-fired boilers. We are relinquishing our coal consumption permits and completely abandoning our dependency on coal. We have made the decision to become fully dependent on natural gas, which is a more efficient and more environmentally friendly strategy for energy consumption. I am proud of the continuing reduction in our carbon footprint, greenhouse gases, and carbon dioxide emissions. These decisions further demonstrate our commitment to sustainability and cost-efficient utility consumption.
6. **Summer Work on In-Ground Electrical Upgrade.** I want to remind the campus that we will be continuing our multi-phase underground high-voltage electrical distribution system upgrade this summer. Between May and August, we will be replacing our high-voltage distribution system at the top of the Hill with considerable work along College Heights Boulevard and in and around Cherry Hall, Potter Hall, and the Garrett Conference Center. Chillers will be replaced, the Mimosa Alley substation will be retired and decommissioned, and we will remove the poles and aerial lines on College Heights Boulevard from State Street to just beyond College Street. The excavation in and around the three affected buildings will begin on May 13 and be completed by August 16. This will be disruptive during the summer, but the work will be complete and everything restored by the time students arrive in August. More detailed reports relating to brief losses of power in these buildings will be forthcoming.
7. **Winter Weather.** My compliments to our facilities team, our building associates, and our grounds crew for their diligence in dealing with winter weather conditions. Great job to everyone involved with keeping our campus safe, pleasant, and warm.
8. **Spring Academic Competition.** My compliments also to all the faculty who will be involved with students as we gear up for our undergraduate research competitions this spring, and assist many of our students in the pursuit of the prestigious national and international scholarships and various spring academic competitions.
9. **Civic Engagement.** My compliments also go out to our students who are involved in many community volunteer efforts and civically responsible activities. Our students are involved all over Bowling Green this semester in efforts that improve the quality of life for others in our community. The annual student-led Up til' Dawn fundraiser for St. Jude Children's Hospital is set for April 5. This is among many activities in which our students are making a difference for those in need across the region and beyond.
10. **Next Year's Budget.** Finally, we will be reporting to you in due course on the challenges we face with putting our budget together for the coming year. The good news is that state cuts have ceased, but the bad news is there will be no additional state funding for the coming year. We will be on our own next year with a modest tuition increase as the only new revenue we will experience. We have a significant challenge in balancing our budget as our expenses and needs far outpace the amount of revenue

which even a five percent tuition increase can generate. We will be sharing more details with you as the spring unfolds.

Thank you for your continuing good work and service to our students and to each other.

Gary A. Ransdell

Attachment – 2012 Statewide Enrollment via CPE